

San Bernardino County Sun

Grandson of Muir dies at 88

Highland man graduated from Barstow High School

By WESLEY G. HUGHES

Staff Writer

Saturday, December 11, 2004 - Walter Muir of Highland, last surviving grandson of America's most famous naturalist, John Muir, died Thursday night at Community Hospital of San Bernardino after a short illness. He was 88.

Although he was born two years after the death of his grandfather, it was fitting that the descendant of the founder and first president of the Sierra Club should also be an outdoorsman.

It was just this year that his grandfather, known as "the father of our national parks," was memorialized with his likeness displayed on the reverse side of the new U.S. 25-cent piece for California.

Earl Guy of La Habra, Walter Muir's son, reminisced Friday about his father, about the hunting and the fishing in the Sierras.

"He taught me to handle a shotgun," he said.

"I couldn't have had a better father."

Guy chuckled a bit as he recalled his father "trying to teach me to drive our '37 Chevy." Learning to use the clutch was a real challenge and the car would buck and dad would say, "Man, I can't believe this."

Walter Muir and two of his brothers operated a profitable gold mine near the family's ranch near Daggett. Guy remembers being allowed to go down in the shaft as a boy, wearing a hard hat with a lamp on its front.

The mine was washed out in a flood, and the brothers moved to Salt Lake City and later to Palm Desert. Two of Walter Muir's three brothers were race car drivers and one was a pilot, who flew crop dusters.

A 1933 graduate of Barstow High School, Walter Muir and Margaret, his wife of 63 years, were longtime residents of Highland. A student of his famous grandfather's life, Walter turned his home office into a library of books and memorabilia about and by John Muir. He had every book written by the naturalist and many about him by other authors.

"The more I study him and the things he did, the more amazed I am," Walter told an interviewer four years ago. "He had the most incredible way of describing things, in words I wouldn't even think of."

Walter and Margaret Muir contributed the money to build the Muir Nature Trail at Wildhaven, the San Bernardino Mountains Wildlife Society's preserve at Cedar Glen.

Walter Muir worked as an airplane mechanic during World War II at what later became Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino. He also worked for a lumber company and the Celotex Corp. He retired from the real-estate business in Redlands. He was a member of the San Bernardino Masonic Lodge 178, F&AM.

Guy said his mother has had health problems and he didn't tell her of her husband's death until Friday

afternoon.

“She took it hard,” he said.

He said she would be moving into an assisted-living facility near his La Habra home.

In addition to his wife and son, Walter Muir leaves a daughter, Marlene of Colorado, seven grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Visitation is set for 10 a.m. Wednesday at Bobbitt Memorial Chapel, 1299 E. Highland Ave., San Bernardino. Burial will follow At 11 a.m. at Bellevue Memorial Park in Ontario.

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